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MISCELLANY.

Crime and Punishment.—Mr. Luttrell has introduced into the House of Commons a "Punishment of Offenders Bill," which has as its four main objects (1) to raise the age of liability to capital punishment from sixteen to twenty-one, (2) to raise the age of liability to penal servitude from sixteen to eighteen, (3) to exempt persons over the age of sixteen from liability to corporal punishment, and (4) to make ten years the maximum term of penal servitude except for homicide or an attempt to murder. It is not to be expected that so radical a reform of our criminal law should pass through Parliament unopposed, so that there is little chance of the bill becoming law; and while the first two objects are in consonance with scientific penology, we doubt whether the same is true of the others. There is a class of brutal criminal for whom in special cases corporal punishment is a salutary deterrent, and there is another class who cannot safely be restored to liberty even after ten years of punishment.

More practical is another measure, also introduced by Mr. Luttrell, "to amend the law with regard to the payment of fines, damages, and costs, and to imprisonment in default of payment thereof." Its leading provisions are: (1) That no person having a settled place of abode and not likely to abscond shall be committed to prison in default of payment of a fine, etc., until the expiration of a period (not less than a week) to be prescribed by the Secretary of State; (2) that a person not having a settled place of abode shall have the benefit of the respite if he enters for the period of grace any institution approved by the Secretary of State; and (3) that any pecuniary penalty may be paid at any post office. As the whole subject of imprisonment is likely to be reconsidered soon and to be dealt with by new legislation, the smaller reform promoted by this bill is not urgent, but it appears to be upon the right lines. The average number of persons committed to prison annually for default in payment of fines during the last ten years in England and Wales was close on 100,000.—London Law Journal.

A 444-Year Lawsuit.—In the two villages of Luuceran and Lancoque, in the Alpes-Maritimes, France, June 10 was kept as a public holiday to celebrate the end of a great lawsuit which had kept the two villages divided since November 14, 1462. The question of dispute was the possession of a piece of land at Lova, which each village claimed. A few days ago the court at Nice definitely settled the matter by dividing the land equally between the villages. The total cost of this lawsuit during the 444 years amounts to £30,000, while the value of the land in dispute was about £400. The law papers which had accumulated were docketed in 1,856 parcels, which weighed sixteen tons, and were stored in a large disused church.—Boston Law Journal and Financial Chronicle.